

DATING VIOLENCE RESOURCE CENTER

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Teen Dating Violence fact sheet

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
Victims of Crime

Crime victims can call
1-800-FYI-CALL
M-F 8:30am-8:30pm
or e-mail us at gethelp@ncvc.org.

What is Dating Violence?

Dating violence is controlling, abusive, and aggressive behavior in a romantic relationship. It occurs in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships and can include verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or a combination of these.

Incidence of Teen Dating Violence

- Approximately 1 in 5 high school girls reports being abused by a boyfriend.^a
- 40% of teenage girls ages 14-17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.^b
- 50%-80% of teens report knowing someone involved in a violent relationship.^c
- Physical aggression occurs in 1 in 3 teen dating relationships.^d
- 33% of teenage girls report experiencing physical violence at the hands of a dating partner.^e
- Young women, ages 16-24, experience the highest rates of relationship violence.^f
- 12% of high school students (female and male) report experiencing some form of dating violence.^g
- Date rape accounts for almost 70% of the sexual assaults reported by adolescent and college age women; 38% of those women are between 14 and 17 years old.^h
- Many studies indicate that as a dating relationship becomes more serious the potential for and nature of violent behavior also escalates.ⁱ

Victims and Dating Violence

- Victims may remain in an abusive relationship for many reasons, including: fear of the perpetrator, self-blame, minimization of the crime, loyalty or love for the perpetrator, social or religious stigma, or lack of understanding.

- Sexual assault victims experience more anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide than non-victims.^j
- Initial reactions to rape and sexual assault include anger, depression, embarrassment, and guilt.^j

Dating Violence and the Law

- All 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws against dating violence behaviors such as sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. However, the specific term “dating violence” is almost never used in these laws.
- In 39 states and the District of Columbia, victims of dating violence can apply for protective orders against the perpetrator. Age requirements and the language of the laws vary by state.

Who Can Help

- Crisis hotlines or campus helplines can provide immediate assistance and referrals to sexual assault or domestic violence programs that provide shelter, counseling, support groups, legal assistance, and medical services/accompaniment.
- University and college health centers often offer counseling services. Campus police or school judicial programs can provide sanctions for on-campus violations.
- Legal options include reporting to the police, obtaining protective orders, and cooperating with criminal prosecution.

The Dating Violence Resource Center, a program of the National Center for Victims of Crime, provides training and technical assistance to the Office on Violence Against Women grant recipients in order to increase awareness of and commitment to addressing teen dating violence and to help craft community-specific responses to meet the needs of teenage victims of dating violence.

a Silverman et al., “Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality,” *JAMA*, (2001).

b “Children Now,” Kaiser Permanente poll, December 1995.

c M. O’Keefe and L. Trester, “Victims of Dating Violence Among High School Students,” *Violence Against Women*, 4, no. 2 (1998): 195-223.

d Avery-Leaf and Cascardi, “Dating Violence Education,” *Preventing Violence in Relationships*, (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002), 82.

e Remarks by Judge Richard Lee at “Love and Violence and Perpetrators,” New York City Coalition for Women’s Mental Health, January 1991.

f C. M. Rennison and S. Welchans, “BJS Special Report: Intimate Partner Violence,” *USDOJ-OJP, NCJ 178247*, (2000).

g R. Gelles and Cornell C. Pedrick, *Intimate Violence in Families*, (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990), 66.

h B. Levy, *Dating Violence*, (Seattle: Seal Press, 1991), 9.

i *Teen Dating Violence Resource Manual*, (Denver: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1997), 17.

j B. Caponera, “Guidelines for Counseling Adolescents in Sexually Coercive Relationships,” *New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs*, (1998).